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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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SUBJECT: NIE-61: Consequences of Communist Control over the  
Indian Subcontinent\* (Revised Draft for Board Consideration)

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the strategic consequences to the West and to the Soviet Bloc of the establishment of Communist control over the Indian subcontinent without either the Middle East or South-east Asia having previously come under Communist control. Whether or not the subcontinent is likely to come under Communist control is a question beyond the scope of this estimate.

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The following conclusions do not constitute a prediction of a probable course of events but are rather an estimate of what would happen in the unlikely event that the Indian subcontinent

\* For the purposes of this estimate, the Indian subcontinent will be taken to include India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the border states of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan, and Ceylon.

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fell under Communist control with the world situation otherwise substantially as at present. Particularly improbable is the assumption that the subcontinent would fall under Communist control prior to extensive Communist victories in Southeast Asia. Further precision in estimating the probable course of events following a Communist victory in South Asia would necessitate prior estimates of how and when such a victory might occur.

1. The most serious effects<sup>1</sup> of the loss of the Indian subcontinent to Communist control would be psychological and political. A Communist victory in South Asia, if not preceded by the loss of much of Southeast Asia, would be speedily followed by it in the absence of decisive Western counteraction. The remaining non-Communist countries of Asia would be under strong pressure from their Communist neighbors. Such victories would greatly reduce the usefulness of the UN to the West, and tend to undermine the will to resist Communist aggression in non-Communist Asia, Africa, and Western Europe.

2. In present circumstances,<sup>2</sup> denial of Western access to the subcontinent would necessitate serious readjustments in the foreign trade and exchange pattern of the UK and the other Commonwealth countries and would increase the cost of

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European commercial communications with the Far East. To what extent the Communist subcontinent would in fact enforce the above restrictions, and whether the effects would be as serious at some future date as they would be at the moment, cannot be estimated.

3. Even under cold war conditions, the West eventually would probably be denied the strategic materials now being obtained from the subcontinent. The most important are mica, graphite, manganese, and jute.

4. In present circumstances,<sup>3</sup> loss of these strategic materials would not significantly reduce defense and essential civilian consumption. However, US stockpiles would have to be drawn on pending the development of generally inferior and more expensive alternate sources and substitute materials. Moreover, the West would have to accept some reductions in quantity and quality of output until these substantial adjustments had been made.

5. At least in the short run,<sup>4</sup> Communist control of the subcontinent would provide few economic benefits to the rest of the Soviet Bloc. The strategic gain to the Bloc--except possibly with respect to monazite and rubber--would be meager.

6. Although the Communists would face serious<sup>5</sup> difficulties, they would probably have considerable success in developing the subcontinent's substantial economic

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resources, even if trade with the West were sharply curtailed and Soviet Bloc assistance were limited. Industrial production in certain key industries would gradually rise and agricultural output improve. However, it would require many years and large-scale Soviet assistance before an industrial complex could be created capable of supplying the material required for large-scale modern warfare.

7. The most important effects of Communist control of the subcontinent on Western military capabilities would be: (a) the elimination of any prospect of the eventual availability of the subcontinent's forces and facilities; and (b) the diversion of Western strength required to meet the new strategic situation in the Indian Ocean area.

8. In addition to imposing these disadvantages upon the West, the Soviet Bloc would gain access to strategically located air and submarine bases and would gain control of the military potential of the subcontinent. The Soviet Bloc's development of this potential would probably be limited to the forces and facilities required to maintain internal security, to defend the subcontinent itself against Western attack, and to attack Western communications in the Indian Ocean area.

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## DISCUSSION

### I. POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

9. The establishment of Communist control over the Indian subcontinent would be a major victory for the USSR in its efforts to Communize the world. It would add five nations, two of them large and potentially powerful, and nearly a fifth of the world's population to the Soviet Bloc, and, in the absence of decisive Western counteraction, would precipitate the rapid transfer of much of Southeast Asia to Communist control supposing this had not already occurred.<sup>6</sup> Even those countries of Asia which did not speedily follow South Asia into the Soviet bloc (i.e., the countries of the Near East, Japan, the Philippines and possibly Indonesia) would be under great pressure to accommodate themselves to the neighboring Communist regimes.<sup>7</sup>

10. The loss of the South Asian members of the UN (India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan) to the Soviet side would greatly reduce the usefulness of the UN to the West either by creating such a large obstructionist bloc that the existing organization would be unworkable or, if the new regimes were not recognized, by destroying any UN claim to being a truly world organization.

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11. The psychological impact of a Communist victory in South Asia would be tremendous and worldwide. The Communization of South Asia coming on the heels of the Communist victory in China would tend to create the impression throughout non-Communist Asia, Africa, and Western Europe that the advance of Communism was inexorable. Confidence in the capacity of the Western Powers to arrest the expansion of Communism would be shaken.

## II. ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

### A. Effect on the Economic Position of the West

12. In general, the economic consequences of Communist control over the Indian subcontinent would also depend on conditions in other areas at the time such control was attained. At the present time, Communist accession to power in the subcontinent would necessitate serious readjustments in the foreign trade and exchange pattern of the UK and the remainder of the Commonwealth. For example, the British would lose their substantial investments in India, a loss which would, however, be in part balanced by the probable cancellation of the UK's obligation to repay the sterling balances earned by India during World War II. The UK, Australia, and New Zealand would, initially at least, be hard pressed to find substitutes in dollar markets for many goods

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now obtained from the subcontinent and similarly would have to develop new markets for goods now exported to India. The loss of subcontinent bunkering and drydocking facilities and civil air transit rights would substantially increase the cost of British trade with the Far East, particularly with Australia and New Zealand. To what extent a Communist subcontinent would in fact enforce the above restrictions, and whether the effects would be as serious at some future date as they would be at the moment, cannot be estimated.

13. It is possible, however, to estimate the consequences of the loss of Western access to the several strategic raw materials and the number of widely used though less critically important items of which the Indian subcontinent is now a major source. The principal commodities involved are as follows:\*

- a. Manganese ore—India currently supplies about 25 percent of the non-Communist world's consumption of manganese ore, and about 35 percent of that used by the US. Since the Indian product is almost markedly superior in grade to that obtainable elsewhere, its importance is greater than these percentage figures would indicate.

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\* India also has unequalled reserves of monazite sands, from which thorium (of potential use for atomic energy) and rare earths can be obtained, and also is a source of beryl, of some strategic importance in beryllium cooper. Although India has thus far prohibited the export of monazite, it has entered into negotiation for its sale to the US. India restricts the exportation of beryl and the US has been able to obtain only minor amounts.

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- b. Mica—India is virtually the sole supplier to the West of the more critical classes of block and sheet muscovite mica, which is used in manufacture of vacuum tubes and other communications equipment, boiler guages, and oxygen breathing equipment.
- c. Graphite—Ceylon is now the only significant non-Communist source of high grade amorphous lump graphite, which is used in manufacture of carbon brushes for electrical equipment.
- d. Jute and jute products—India and Pakistan furnish virtually all the jute and jute products which enter world trade. Jute is the principal material used in bags and bale coverings for transport and storage of bulk commodities like grain, fertilizer, cement and cotton.
- e. Other products—India is the chief world supplier of premium quality kyanite, which is a high grade refractory used in electric furnace linings, electrical and chemical porcelain, and spark plugs; furnishes about 75 percent of the world's supply of high grade shellac; and provides about a quarter of the world's supply of opium for medical purposes. India and Ceylon together produce close to 85 percent of the tea entering international trade and about two-thirds of the black pepper. Ceylon is a relatively minor source of rubber for the non-Communist world.



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14. Communist control of the subcontinent would make the principal strategic materials listed above unavailable to the West in wartime and probably gradually under cold war conditions as well. The Communists would probably initially be willing to continue supplying strategic materials like manganese, mica, and graphite to the West if the latter did not apply to the subcontinent the export controls now in force against the other Communist countries, since the loss of the petroleum products, machinery, and other controlled items which the subcontinent now obtains from the West in exchange for these strategic raw materials would impose a considerable strain on the economy of the subcontinent. In addition, the Communists would probably continue to export less critical items like tea, black pepper, and possibly jute in exchange for foodstuffs and other products not now subject to Western export controls. However, a gradual drying up of the subcontinent's trade with the West would almost certainly take place, because the West would seek to develop alternate sources of critical materials and the Communists in the subcontinent would attempt to move toward greater self-sufficiency.

15. Denial of the subcontinent's products to the West as a result of a Communist accession to power would require substantial readjustments on the part of the US and even greater readjustments on the part of its allies. The West would have to

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spend time and money in developing generally inferior alternate sources, would have to develop substitute materials in some cases, and would have to accept some reductions in quantity or quality of output until these adjustments had been made. Moreover,<sup>9</sup> the US would be under greater pressure to give financial assistance to Western Europe to the extent that this area's already meager dollar resources would have to be used for the purchase of those substitute materials available only in dollar areas.

16. The impact on the West of the denial of the subcontinent's strategic materials would depend on the extent to which stockpiling goals had been achieved and alternate sources expanded at the time that the subcontinent's resources were cut off. Although denial of these resources would not necessitate any significant reduction in defense and essential consumption in the US, the over-all effect, in terms of the magnitude of the readjustments required, would almost certainly be serious at any time up through 1954. The present outlook with respect to the principal strategic commodities named above is as follows;

- a. Manganese ore--The US could initially maintain its own steel production by drawing on its manganese stockpile. Significant reductions in the output of other Western countries, where little stockpiling of manganese has taken place, could also be averted

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if US reserves were made available in sufficiently large quantity. The US stockpile, which was 45 percent complete at the end of 1951, is probably sufficient to cover its import requirements for about two and a half years. In the long run, adequate supplies of manganese could be obtained from other sources--notably Brazil, the Gold Coast, South Africa, Belgian Congo, and Angola--where some expansion facilities to meet the increasing demand for manganese is already taking place. However, an increase in output sufficient to make up completely for the loss of Indian manganese would require several years in view of manpower and equipment shortages, transport and loading facility bottlenecks, and various other problems, and some curtailment of steel production might be required to prevent depletion of the stockpile before these other sources had come into full production. In any event, loss of the superior Indian ore would require adjustments in metallurgical practice, entailing some loss in rate of production, and higher costs.

- b. Mica--Loss of the Indian supply of block and sheet mica would require drastic conservation measures in the US, where stockpiling is about 25 percent complete,

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and even more stringent curbs on consumption in the other Western countries, where stockpiles are virtually nonexistent. Present US stocks of these critical classes of mica represent about a year's supply. Development of new sources would be very costly and the efforts being made to develop substitutes cannot be expected to show usable results for several years.

- c. Graphite—Since Ceylon is the only source of high grade amorphous lump graphite, the US would have to draw on its stockpile, notably for such rigorous uses as carbon brushes in high-altitude aircraft, and would have to modify specifications for other end-items where inferior grades of graphite might possibly be used. Although the US stockpile was close to its goal of 3,356 metric tons at the end of 1951, that level represented only about a quarter of Ceylon's annual exports.
- d. Jute and jute products—The loss would be serious, involving far-reaching conservation measures and costly adjustments, especially for countries like those of Western Europe where substitutes are less readily available.

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e. Other products—Development of synthetic substitutes for Indian kyanite is well under way, and the loss of the Indian product should cause no serious difficulties. Loss of Indian shellac would involve higher costs and widespread inconvenience since different substitutes would have to be developed for most of the various uses of shellac. Loss of Indian opium would inconvenience the UK, which has obtained most of its supply from the subcontinent.

B. Effect on the Economic Position of the Soviet Bloc <sup>10</sup>

17. At least in the short run, Communist control of the subcontinent would provide few economic benefits to the rest of the Soviet Bloc. The USSR would probably hasten to exploit India's thorium-bearing monazite for atomic energy development purposes, and the Bloc as a whole could probably use the limited amounts of rubber, cotton, and cotton textiles available, as well as moderate amounts of mica, graphite, iron and manganese ores, beryl, and jute products. Transporting these products to the Soviet Bloc would present serious problems, however, and in any event the amount of goods that the Soviet Bloc could absorb would be relatively small, in terms both of the subcontinent's present exports and of total Soviet Bloc consumption. The strategic gain to the Bloc — except possibly with respect to monazite and rubber — would be meager.

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18. Conversely, the Soviet Bloc probably could and would provide only limited assistance to a Communist subcontinent struggling with the major internal readjustments arising from the transfer of economic and political power to a Communist regime and from the probable cutting-off of major Western imports. Just as the subcontinent's principal exports are commodities for which the Soviet Bloc has no great immediate need, so its principal present imports -- notably petroleum products, machinery and other metal manufactures, industrial chemicals, and foodstuffs -- are items which the Communist world cannot easily spare. The USSR's willingness and ability to make up for the loss of Western products would be sharply limited by competing demands within the Bloc and by the grave shortage of shipping facilities.

19. Initially, food and petroleum would be the major problems facing a Communist regime. The subcontinent now imports about four million tons of grain. This deficiency would probably be met by a variety of measures including some imports from the USSR, ruthless rationing and crop collection methods and, if the Communists were sufficiently well entrenched to clash with religious sentiment, use for human consumption of approximately a million tons of grain now consumed by monkeys and cattle. Much of India's food deficit

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could be provided by mainland Southeast Asia if that area were Communist. Loss of the six million tons of petroleum now imported from the Middle East would almost certainly cause an initial decline in industrial output and for some time create bottlenecks in production. However, the effects would probably not be crippling. Some petroleum could be obtained from the Soviet Bloc and much oil burning equipment could be converted to coal. The denial of spare parts and other capital equipment, industrial chemicals, and miscellaneous metal products previously obtained from the West would impose further curbs on industrial output.

20. Despite these difficulties, the Communists would probably have considerable success in gradually mobilizing and exploiting the substantial resources of the subcontinent. Although the area is predominantly agricultural and characterized by widespread poverty, it has the largest industrial plant in Asia outside of Japan, a huge labor supply including a considerable number of skilled and semi-skilled workers, and basic raw material resources sufficient to support an extensive industrial expansion. During World War II, India demonstrated considerable potentiality for capital formation and the Communists in other areas have shown their ability for effective mobilization of resources in predominately agrarian areas characterized by low per-capita productivity. Thus, production in certain key

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industries, particularly steel, would probably rise after the initial period of readjustment, and there would probably be a gradual improvement in agricultural output. However, the development of an industrial complex of the order of that existing in Japan and Manchuria at the start of World War II could only be accomplished, if at all, over a long period of time.

21. In terms of support for a military effort, therefore, the subcontinent could probably with only minimum Soviet Bloc assistance: (a) supply small arms and ammunition and some artillery to a large ground army; and (b) provide logistical support for whatever additional Soviet forces and equipment were necessary to defend the subcontinent against Western attack and to attack Western communications in the Indian Ocean area (see para. 29). A Communist subcontinent could not, however, without substantial outside assistance and a long-term capital investment program, produce more than insignificant amounts of artillery, tanks, armored vehicles, communications equipment, naval vessels and aircraft.

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III. MILITARY CONSEQUENCES

A. The Existing Situation

22. Forces. The nations of the subcontinent possess forces in being of approximately 650,000, some 1,500,000 trained reservists, and a vast reservoir of manpower. The armies of India and Pakistan, comprising more than 90 percent of the above active strength, are trained and disciplined forces of good fighting quality. Both countries have small air forces designed primarily for support of ground operations and a few light naval surface vessels.

23. Facilities. The subcontinent's other military assets include:

- a. A large number of excellent airfields and airbase sites (notably in West Pakistan) within medium and heavy bomber range of major industrial and governmental centers in Soviet Central Asia and the interior of Communist China. Communications and other facilities are adequate for maintenance of large-scale operations from these bases.

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- b. Major ports, airbases, and other facilities which could be used: (1) for maintenance of communications between Western Europe and the Far East and for logistical support of possible military operations in the Middle or Far East; or (2) for the support of air and naval action against these communications.
- c. Limited facilities for production of arms and equipment. Although these facilities can supply significant amounts of small arms and ammunition, the subcontinent is dependent on outside sources for most other major items of material.

24. Western Interests. At present the military potential of the subcontinent is not available to the West except in certain minor respects such as British base rights in Ceylon, recruiting rights in Nepal, and the probable use of facilities in Pakistan in time of war. There is, however, an obvious Western interest in denial of this potential to Communism and in the possible future availability of some of these forces and facilities in certain contingencies. In particular, it is considered that, if relations

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between India and Pakistan can be improved, the military strength of Pakistan might become effective as a stabilizing factor in the Middle East and that Pakistani air bases might become available to the West in the event of general war.

B. Effect on Western Military Capabilities

25. The most important consequences of Communist control of the subcontinent on Western military capabilities would be: (a) the denial of any prospect of the eventual availability of the subcontinent's forces and facilities; and (b) the diversion of Western strength required to meet the new strategic situation in the Indian Ocean area. Denial of access to the subcontinent's ports and airfields would, in itself, greatly hinder Western sea and air communications in that area. Even in time of peace, the fall of the subcontinent to Communism would require a diversion of Western military resources to the Middle East and to Southeast Asia to check the further expansion of Communism through subversion. In the event of war, the vulnerability of Western seaborne communications, particularly those with the Persian Gulf area, to attack from bases on the subcontinent would require a diversion of combat forces for their protection disproportionate to the diversion of Soviet strength to such operations.

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C. Effect on Soviet Bloc Military Capabilities

26. The immediate military advantages which the Soviet Bloc would derive from Communist control of the subcontinent would be: (a) relief from the potential danger of Western air attack from Pakistani bases; (b) denial of the facilities and military potential of the subcontinent to the West; (c) diversion of Western military resources to the support of the Middle East and Southeast Asia; and (d) access to bases from which Soviet submarines, surface raiders, and aircraft could attack Western communications in the Indian Ocean area in the event of war.

27. The Soviet Bloc would also gain control of the subcontinent's military potential, but this control would not immediately constitute a net gain in Soviet Bloc military strength. The subcontinent's existing military establishments would probably have been demoralized and disrupted in the process of Communist accession to power; new, Communist-controlled military establishments would have to be created. In any case, any indigenous military forces would, for some time, be fully employed in maintaining internal security, or committed to the defense of the subcontinent in the event of war.

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28. The extent to which the Soviet Bloc would eventually build up Communist military strength in the subcontinent would probably be limited by the following considerations:

- a. A large-scale build-up of military forces and installations would require a heavy investment in technical and material assistance, either through direct supply of military end-items or through development of the subcontinent's now limited war industry. This investment could be made only at the expense of military and economic requirements elsewhere in the Bloc which are likely to remain pressing for many years to come.
- b. Difficulties of access and control would make a Soviet investment in subcontinent military power a risky one. Unlike Communist China, the subcontinent has no major land communications with the present Soviet Bloc and would therefore have to be supplied almost entirely by sea and air. In the event of war, the subcontinent military establishment's supply lines would thus be gravely vulnerable to Western naval interdiction.

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c. There would be slight strategic advantage in building up the subcontinent's military strength beyond that required for internal security, defense of the subcontinent itself, and harassment of Western communications in the Indian Ocean area. Barring a marked change in the global balance of naval power, any surplus military strength in the subcontinent could be used only against adjacent continental areas, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and even there its employment would face extreme logistic difficulties, while Soviet and Chinese Communist forces are already available for such operations.

29. On balance, we believe that the Soviet Bloc would be unlikely to develop the military potential of the subcontinent beyond the strength required to maintain internal security, to defend the subcontinent itself against Western attack, and to attack Western communications in the Indian Ocean area.

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